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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 003936

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [CASC](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDAN TIGHTENS BORDER BUT PROMISES SOME  
LOOSENING...AFTER MESSAGE TO ISRAEL IS MADE

REF: A. 01 AMMAN 3763 B. JERUSALEM 2027

Classified By: EDWARD W. GNEHM FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) Despite public reassurances that travel restrictions on Palestinians entering Jordan have been eased, tacit acknowledgments made privately by Jordanian officials buttressed by anecdotal evidence indicate that a quota system is in place to restrict the number of Palestinians who can cross into Jordan. This has affected Palestinian Americans in many cases (Ref B), though senior Jordanian officials have undertaken to ease the restrictions on transiting Palestinian Americans. In the end, however, Jordanian officials are unlikely to allow Palestinians--even those with valid Jordanian travel documents--unrestricted travel to Jordan until the humanitarian situation eases across the river and fears of a mass refugee flow diminishes.

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GOJ BORDER RESTRICTIONS EASED...BUT THERE ARE STILL  
RESTRICTIONS  
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2. (C) When the Israelis began "Operation Defensive Shield" in March, the GOJ virtually shut down the border as a precaution against any mass movements. Until recently, the GOJ allowed Palestinians entry to Jordan only in three categories: for medical emergencies, for study, and for transit to a third country. Jordanian officials eased those restrictions at the end of June in coordination with the Palestinian Interior Ministry. On July 16, the Palestinian Authority published in the Jordanian daily newspaper al-Dustur a list of categories of Palestinians who can cross into Jordan, reportedly based on agreements worked out between the PA and the GOJ. According to the article, Palestinians who are yellow card holders--thus having Jordanian citizenship and usually traveling on a Jordanian passport--are allowed to cross at any time. However, green card holders--who have usually either forfeited Jordanian citizenship when they returned to the West Bank or are West Bank residents with East Bank jobs--are allowed entry only if they have Jordanian relatives who can request prior approval for their travel from GOJ officials (or, based on our experience, can prove they have jobs to return to in Jordan). For a more detailed description of yellow card holders vs. green card holders, please see Ref A. The article also details the exceptions who are given permission to cross: students registered or intending to register at Jordanian Universities, medical and humanitarian cases, PA staff, businessmen, Palestinians who have proof of travel to a third country, and those who can prove passage to weddings or funerals. PA officials also urged West Bank residents not to travel to the border unless they fall into one of these categories.

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PALESTINIANS WELCOME, IN CONTROLLED NUMBERS  
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3. (C) From the official Jordanian optic, the increased number of Palestinians at the border reflects a normal seasonal spike. Foreign Minister Muasher recently explained to the Ambassador that the numbers at the border have increased in the recent weeks, but they are in line with previous summers as West Bank Palestinians seek entry to visit relatives in Jordan, attend weddings, etc. While Minister of the Interior Qaftan Majali has said publicly that "movement across the bridge is normal" and GOJ officials have publicly said roughly 1,000 Palestinians are crossing a day, Palestinian Jordanian contacts and press reports claim that the GOJ is only allowing 350 Palestinian I.D. holders to cross a day. We understand that there is daily communication between the Israeli and Jordanian sides before the border opens to assure no Palestinians clear the Israeli side without permission to enter the Jordanian side.

4. (C) GID Director Said Kheir confirmed to the Ambassador that the number of Palestinians crossing into Jordan is in fact being "controlled" because of "security-driven concerns". The foremost of these concerns is that declining humanitarian conditions in the West Bank will trigger another

Palestinian exodus. In restricting the number of Palestinians allowed to cross, the GOJ is reinforcing the message to the Israelis that Jordan will not be used as a safety valve. This policy is a direct consequence of the divide separating Palestinian Jordanians and East Bankers. Already a minority, East Bankers fear that a new influx of Palestinian refugees would fundamentally change the nature of the state.

15. (C) We defer to Congen Jerusalem as to conditions in the West Bank, but we hear anecdotes from travelers which paint a fairly grim picture. Due to curfews and decreased mobility, Palestinians in the West Bank are reportedly having difficulties procuring airline tickets to prove that they are entering Jordan to transit. Palestinians unable to cross at Allenby are trapped in Jericho because road blocks and closures inhibit their ability to return home, according to Embassy contacts. Compounding the misery of being trapped in Jericho, Palestinian Jordanian contacts have complained that corruption has proliferated as the back-up across the river has increased. Companies that facilitate the bridge crossing have reportedly doubled their fees.

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THE PALESTINIAN AMERICAN DILEMMA...RELIEF IN SIGHT?  
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16. (C) Per Ref B, the situation has affected many Palestinian Americans who have been unable to transit through Jordan to return to the U.S. While third country nationals are able to travel easily into Jordan as "tourists", Palestinian American dual citizens who have Palestinian I.D. cards are being treated as Palestinians, and as such come under the quota system. The Ambassador has pressed GOJ officials, most recently GID director Said Kheir, to allow Palestinian Americans to be processed as third country nationals instead of as Palestinians. Kheir agreed to liberalize the process to facilitate the movement of Palestinian Americans into Jordan and we understand that the situation has eased in some individual cases. We are working on a more systematic solution. Conoff visited the Jordanian side of the Allenby bridge on July 16 to view the situation (see septel).

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COMMENT  
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17. (C) Ultimately, this problem will recur as long as Jordanian officials worry about the political consequences of unrestricted access to Jordan for Palestinians. An improvement in the humanitarian situation in the West Bank would do something to ease Jordanian concerns, though only genuine progress in the MEPP is likely to make a decisive difference for Jordanian policy. In the meantime, we will continue to work to mitigate the effects of long-established policy.  
Gnehm